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Michigan Network of Employers for Traffic Safety

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National Drive Safely at Work Week A Huge Success



The Michigan Network of Employers for Traffic Safety, with the support of United Parcel Service designated April 26-30, 1999 as the third annual National Drive Safely at Work Week (NDSAWW)-a traffic safety campaign for the workplace.

This year's campaign-"Take the Safe Route to Work"-was designed to help employers create awareness of traffic safety issues within their organizations. Nationally, more than 2,500 companies and organizations joined NETS in marking the third annual NDSAWW campaign. NDSAWW is just one element in a 10-year campaign by NETS to reduce the staggering human and economic costs of motor vehicle crashes.

Motor vehicle crashes cost three American workers their lives every day, and cost employers more than \$50 billion a year in legal expenses, property damage and lost productivity, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. NETS believes most motor vehicle crashes are avoidable if drivers keep their mind on the road-and on safety-and avoid behaviors that greatly increase their risk of becoming a traffic statistic.

"More than 8,000 employers nationally have worked with NETS to help improve the safety of their employees, and the number of companies participating in our 'National Drive Safely at Work Week' has more than quadrupled in the last three years," NETS Executive Director Susan B. Herbel said. "As businesses become aware of the issues of traffic safety, they're coming to NETS for the tools and expertise needed to eliminate preventable crashes."

Nearly 500 Michigan businesses requested specially produced kits to promote NDSAWW. The Michigan Municipal Risk Management Authority went even further, purchasing 200 kits for major association members, urging them to emphasize the importance of safe driving in the workplace. "Drive Safely at Work Week" was sponsored by the Michigan Office of Highway Safety Planning (OHSP), the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT), the Traffic Safety Association of Michigan (TSAM), and United Parcel Service.

MDOT electronic message boards were used on well-traveled state highways throughout Michigan to help promote the campaign. Motorists saw the message boards along I-75, I-96 and I-94 in the metro Detroit area and north to the Mackinaw Bridge in St. Ignace.

"Protecting employees from motor vehicle crash injuries can be a valuable investment of time and resources," said campaign spokesperson Bob Lang, engineering director, General Motors Safety Center. "It's smart business to prevent motor vehicle injuries."

Driver inattention, believed to be the cause of as many as 90 percent of traffic crashes, is one of five issues in this year's "Drive Safely at Work Week." "We want to increase awareness of safe driving issues, including safety belt use, road rage and aggressive driving, impaired driving and driver fatigue," said Dan Vartanian, Michigan NETS coordinator. "With awareness, most traffic crashes are preventable."

Thanks to all of the Michigan businesses that participated in National Drive Safely at Work Week. Your willingness to promote traffic safety in the workplace helps create awareness to end preventable, unnecessary and costly traffic crashes which effect our workforce.



NIOSH Alert analyzes vehicle crashes

From 1980 to 1992, motor vehicle crashes were the leading cause of work-related deaths in U.S. workers. During this period, traffic-related motor vehicle crashes accounted for the deaths of 15,830 workers-or 20 percent of all fatal workplace injuries. Also during that period, 1,997 worker deaths were associated with motor vehicle crashes that were not related to traffic on public highways. The number of traffic-related deaths was eight times the number not related to traffic.

This informative publication contains data collected from the National Traumatic Occupational Fatalities Surveillance System and the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration Fatal Accident Reporting System.

As a result of this study, the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) recommends that employers take the following measures to prevent traffic-related deaths and injuries of workers from motor vehicle crashes:

- Conduct driver's license background checks on prospective drivers before they are hired.
- Establish a written policy requiring drivers and passengers to use seat belts at all times. Make sure that employees are aware of and comply with this written policy.
- Provide a seat belt for the driver and each passenger in all employer-provided vehicles. Limit the number of passengers permitted in a vehicle to the number of seat belts available.
- Ensure that drivers comply with designated speed limits in all construction and maintenance zones and on all other roadways.
- Establish schedules that allow drivers to obey speed limits and limit their hours of service according to regulations. Do not permit workers to drive while fatigued or to exceed posted speed limits.
- Ensure that all employees in construction and maintenance zones wear high-visibility clothing (NIOSH, 1994).

- Ensure that workers use appropriate barriers and traffic-control efforts while work is being performed on the sides of roadways normally open to the public.
- Train drivers in safe-driving practices and proper use of vehicle safety features. Make sure that this training is performance-based and periodically repeated.
- Establish written procedures to ensure the proper maintenance of all vehicle systems.
- Make sure that newly purchased vehicles are equipped with appropriate occupant protection, such as shoulder and lap belts and air bags. Equip new vehicles with other safety features, such as antilock brakes and daytime running lights, where appropriate and feasible.
- Consider adopting U.S. Department of Transportation regulations for commercial motor carriers as part of your motor vehicle safety programs. Many of these regulations provide guidance on company policies for other vehicle types and other groups of drivers.

Copies of Alert-DHHS (NIOSH) Publication No. 98-142 and other NIOSH documents are available from Publications Dissemination, EID, National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, 4676 Columbia Parkway, Cincinnati, OH 45226-1998; fax, (513) 533-8573.

The NIOSH Alert examines traffic-related motor vehicle crashes that resulted in the death of a person who was at work when the incident occurred. Events that occurred while traveling to or from work are not included. NIOSH requests your help in bringing this Alert to the attention of workers and employers and raise the awareness of all workers who drive as part of their jobs.

Join the Mobilization to Make Our Roads Safe This Summer Support Law Enforcement to Promote Zero Tolerance for Unbuckled Children



Memorial Day kicks off the summer travel season as families across America take to the road for vacations. Unfortunately, it also is traditionally one of the deadliest times on the nation's roadways. Traffic crashes continue to be the number one cause of death for children and, tragically, six out of ten children killed in crashes are completely unrestrained. Many of these children would have lived had they been properly buckled in child seats, booster seats, or seat belts.

It is illegal in every state for children to ride unbuckled, yet clearly adults are not taking the time to properly secure their children and children are suffering as a result. It's time as a nation that we call for zero tolerance for unbuckled children.

Buckle Up America Week (May 24-31) culminates on Memorial Day weekend. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), in partnership with the Air Bag & Seat Belt Safety Campaign, will again be leading the charge to increase seat belt use and child passenger safety through the Operation ABC Mobilization: America Buckles Up Children. Law enforcement in every state will be out in force during the week to make sure everyone, especially children, is properly buckled up.

There is much you-as individuals, as business owners, as employees and as members of associations and civic groups-can do to support police in their efforts to keep our roads safe. Your involvement starts with you

wearing your seat belt and making sure those riding with you do too. Your support continues with lending your voice to Buckle Up America and the Operation ABC Mobilization: America Buckles Up Children by giving your "Endorsement for Enforcement."

Buckle Up America is the national movement to raise seat belt use to 85 percent and reduce child crash fatalities 15 percent by the year 2000. Many of you have already helped the country move toward this goal. Nineteen million more Americans buckled up in 1998. Much of the credit goes to you and your efforts during last year's Operation ABC Mobilizations.

Lend your support to the growing number of organizations that are urging tougher seat belt enforcement to keep children safe. Publicize your support by issuing a press release, writing to your elected officials, placing a "drop-in" article in your newsletter or company publication, writing an op-ed or letter to-the editor, and making sure your members or employees are informed.

Passing strong seat belt laws, coupled with strengthening enforcement of seat belt laws is the single most effective thing we can do to save the lives of America's children on our roads. A recent study reported in the journal of the American Academy of Pediatrics, found "driver restraint use was the strongest predictor of child restraint use...a restrained driver was three times more likely to restrain a child." Surveys by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration back that up: when drivers are buckled, children riding with them are buckled 87 percent of the time. When drivers aren't buckled, the number of children riding with them who are buckled falls to 24 percent. To get children buckled, we must get everyone buckled up.

So travel safely this summer and have zero tolerance for unbuckled passengers—especially unbuckled children! Protect yourself from impaired drivers by wearing your belt. Protect your children by wearing your belt and making sure children are properly secured in seat belts or child safety seats appropriate for their age and size. And help protect your community by supporting Buckle Up America and the Operation ABC Mobilization: America Buckles Up Children.

With the return of nice weather, Michigan highways are sure to see heavier traffic and more construction zones, as well as an increase in truck enforcement by the Michigan State Police Motor Carrier Division. The Motor Carrier Division is once again gearing up for increased STET operations across the state. A STET is a Special Transportation Enforcement Team comprised of Motor Carrier officers whose goal is increased safety for Michigan's motorists. Last year the Motor Carrier Division conducted 165 STET operations throughout Michigan.

The focus, duration and location of a STET varies. A STET may run from one day to two weeks and will target violations such as speed, size and weight, load securement, equipment violations or driver qualifications. STET Operations are usually held in places such as, rest areas or county parks, to increase the element of surprise and provide for enhanced enforcement in areas in which there is not a permanent weigh station.

During a STET operation Motor Carrier officers strive to accomplish increased safety on Michigan's roadways through a combination of education and enforcement.

For further information about commercial vehicle enforcement programs, please call the Michigan State Police Motor Carrier Division at (517) 336-6195.

Employers can offer parking perk

A possible "perk" for employers to offer their workers is just coming to light.

Similar in concept to the popular 401(k) retirement plans, in which an employee reduces his taxable income in order to contribute to retirement programs, the new provision would allow a similar reduction to permit the employee to pay for the cost of parking.

Other provisions in the tax code allow an employer to pay for employee parking (up to a designated limit) or to provide money for commuting expenses on a tax-free basis.

With the unemployment rate hovering at a near-record low, these provisions can enable some small businesses to compete with larger employers for knowledgeable workers.

Safe Communities at Work



The Office of Highway Safety Planning (OHSP) is actively promoting the Safe Communities concept. It is a comprehensive approach to safety issues that combine local community efforts to prevent violence, substance abuse, and traffic crashes. In every community, traffic crashes will always be a major source of injuries. And in most communities, traffic is the number one producer of the most serious, and most costly injuries.

The success of Safe Communities originates from the coalition members. A local business is represented in the majority of our Safe Communities projects along with law enforcement, medical/health, state/local government, city or community planners, court, traffic planner, education and media.

There are several benefits in becoming a Michigan Safe Community.

- Potential decrease of traffic injuries and fatalities
- Savings in health care costs
- Local data to document the need for traffic and other safety improvements
- Increase in community spirit
- Opportunities for funding of a traffic safety prevention program

OHSP has assessment software available to community coalitions to assist them in taking the first step to

identifying their injury problems and solutions. This instrument is intended to be used by a community coalition committed to safety. Current cities and counties participating in Michigan are: Midland, Otsego, Oscoda, Romulus, Berkley, Rochester, Auburn Hills, Clarkston, Huron Valley, St. Johns, Gaylord, East Tawas, Flint, Washtenaw, Sturgis, Lapeer, Allegan, Macomb (Centerline, Clinton Twp., Harrison, New Baltimore, Richmond, Roseville, Sterling Heights and Utica), Baraga, Houghton, Keweenaw, Marquette, Ontonagon, Dickinson, Iron and Gogebic county.

If you would like more information on Safe Communities and how to get involved, please contact Sue Guggemos of OHSP at 517-333-5320.

NEWS

YOU CAN USE

OHSP has a new look and web address!

The Michigan Office of Highway Safety Planning (OHSP) has upgraded its website and changed the address of its website. The site can now be reached at: <http://www.ohsp.state.mi.us>.

Drunk driving deaths in U.S. fall to lowest in 20 years

In 1997, fatalities from drunk driving on U.S. roads fell to their lowest level in more than 20 years. There were 16,520 alcohol-related fatalities, the lowest since the government began keeping records in 1975. In percentage terms, 39.3 percent of fatalities were alcohol-related, the first time that figure has fallen below 40 percent.

An estimated 69 percent of Americans have taken the buckle-up message to heart, but traffic safety experts say that statistics show many people still resist seat belt use. Sixty-three percent of those who died in car crashes in 1997 were not belted at the time.

Sleeping at the wheel leads to jail sentence

A judge in Holland, Michigan sentenced a trucker to a year in jail and a fine of \$12,260 for causing a crash that killed one person and injured three others. The crash occurred last February when Ronald Libolt, 36, fell asleep at the wheel. Libolt's license was revoked for two years. "There are thousands of people killed in auto crashes each year and they don't all get charged with crimes," said Judge Harry Beach at the sentencing. "But this was your job and you had more of an obligation to realize you were sleepy."